Sanders and Casar Propose Home Team Act Designed to Put Fans First

March 27, 2026 **by Dan McCue**

Rep. Greg Casar, D-Texas (left), and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., film a video at the end of their press conference announcing the Home Team Act. (Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — Billionaire owners of professional sports teams will be forced to put their fans first before attempting to relocate their franchises to other states under legislation introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Rep. Greg Casar, D-Texas.

If passed, the Home Team Act would require team ownership to provide one year of notice before moving a team to a new location if the team would move across state lines or to a new metropolitan area.

During that year prior to the proposed relocation, the franchise in question would be available for purchase by its local communities (or other prospective owners) "at a fair price."

The bill also seeks to empower state and local governments with a right of first refusal to stop the relocation of a professional sports team to another city or state, and would impose a $30,000 per-day-penalty on the owners of professional sports teams who fail to comply with the law.

"I know that in a moment of war, authoritarianism, and massive income and wealth inequality, this might not appear to be one of the most important issues facing humanity, but the truth is, this is an issue that affects tens and tens and tens of millions of people," Sanders said during a press conference Thursday afternoon.

"The fact is, owners are getting richer while taxpayers and fans are getting screwed," said Casar, who authored the bill.

"People talk about how billionaires are underpaying workers in this economy. They talk about how billionaires are buying our elections to ruin our government. But we also have to talk about how billionaires are destroying the simple things in life that make every day life worth living — like rooting for our home teams," he continued.

"The Home Team Act says that our home sports teams do not exist just to make wealthy owners even wealthier; they exist for all of us," Casar said.

"What we're saying with this bill is no, to those who want to unceremoniously uproot our teams that people have rooted for for generations, and no, to these owners extorting taxpayers for billions of dollars in subsidies.

"Far too many Americans know the pain of losing a team just so that the owner can make a buck," he added.

The introduction of the bill comes at a time when one of the NFL's most storied franchises, the Chicago Bears, is threatening to leave the city after more than 100 years in response to the state of Indiana offering massive subsidies.

But both Sanders and Casar spoke from first-hand experience of the heartbreak that accompanies the loss of a beloved local team. In Sanders' case the pain stemmed from the Brooklyn Dodgers' move to Los Angeles in 1958.

"It was a horrific moment for the people in my community of Brooklyn, New York," said Sanders, who grew up in the borough of New York City.

"The Dodgers brought the community together, something I think is true of teams in city after city, where you see people of all backgrounds come out and root for the home team, and you see kids loving their favorite ball players — not even understanding that an owner, in order to make more profit, can simply shut the team down and move to another city," he said.

"Along with the emotional toll, there's the reality that any time an economic enterprise leaves a community, jobs are lost," Sanders

continued. “That alone is a tragedy. But when you compound that with the emotional impact, it’s a double tragedy.”

For Casar, it was the Houston Oilers’ decision to move to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1996.

“It still stings,” he said. “And I can still remember how I felt when the Oilers left and then, a few years later, as the Tennessee Titans, they were in the Super Bowl.

“All of us in Houston were rooting against the Titans that day. I never knew I was going to be a Rams fan, but there you have it,” Casar said.

The Tennessee Titans played in their only Super Bowl, Super Bowl XXXIV, on Jan. 30, 2000. They lost 23–16 to the St. Louis Rams at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, a game famously decided when Titans wide receiver Kevin Dyson was tackled one yard short of the goal line on the final play.

But like Sanders, Casar also spoke of the economic impact of the Oilers’ abandonment of Houston.

“When a venue like the Astrodome suddenly doesn’t have a team, that has a really bad economic impact on the city as well,” he said.

Both men said they hope their bill would lead to many more cities adopting the successful community ownership model used by the Green Bay Packers.

Green Bay uses a unique, non-profit, community-ownership model where over 538,000 fans hold shares, preventing any single individual from owning more than 4% of the team.

That publicly owned structure, featuring more than 5.2 million shares, prevents the team’s relocation and prioritizes its success

over profits.

Rather than distribute dividends among the shareholders, that money is reinvested in the team, stadium and the surrounding community.

A seven-member executive committee and a board of directors, elected by shareholders, manages the Packers on behalf of the citizen owners.

Sanders said a similar tradition of fan ownership is doing very well in Europe, where many soccer teams are owned by those who live in the communities in which they play.

Later, prompted by a reporter, Sanders reflected further on the role of sports in bringing people together — even in divisive, politically polarized times.

“It’s not an accident that Super Bowl Sunday is something like a national holiday,” the senator said. “You can argue, maybe, that professional football is America’s religion.

“So whether you are a conservative or a progressive, whether you are black, white or Latino, you know what it’s like to root for your home team, and for your kids to root for your local players. It certainly does bring communities together,” Sanders continued.

“And let’s not forget the way players go out into the communities they play in, visiting hospitals and doing other things to improve the life of those communities,” he said. “I can tell you, going back a long time ago, that the departure of the Dodgers ruptured the city.

“Professional athletics is something that millions of people invest their hearts in. Millions of kids have learned the basics of arithmetic from tallying the wins and losses of their favorite pitcher, and the batting average of their favorite player.

"So … sports is an emotional thing," he added.

Now that the Home Team Act has been introduced, Sanders would like to see something done about the amount of money the average family has to spend to enjoy a day at the ballpark.

"It really bothers me," he said. "We have working class families who love their local sports teams, want to support them, and by and large can't afford to go to a professional ballgame.

"A family of four can easily spend $1,000 for a Sunday afternoon at the ballpark. I think we can do better than that,' Sanders continued. "What Greg is proposing is an important step, but I think we also need to take a hard look at the kind of prices these teams are charging families to attend their games.

"I don't think it's a radical statement at all to say that if you're a working class family, you might want to take your kids to see a ball game without having to mortgage your home. And that's an issue I think we should be looking at," he said.

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